RESTORATION REVIEW

BEHOLD HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY! IT IS LIKE THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT UPON THE HEAD THAT RAN DOWN UPON THE BEARD, EVEN AARON'S

BEARD: THAT WENT DOWN TO THE SKIRTS OF HIS GARMENTS; AS THE DEW OF HERMON, AND AS THE DEW THAT DESCENDED UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF ZION: FOR THERE THE LORD COMMANDED THE BLESSING - EVEN LIFE EVERMORE. PSALM 133

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FELLOWSHIP AND THE BREAKING OF BREAD

An incident at the recent Lectureship at Abilene Christian College will illustrate one of the main points of this article. A brother who has been withdrawn from (excommunicated) by a Church of Christ in Texas was talking with some of his old friends when a Dallas preacher walked up and made it obvious that he had no intention of even speaking to the excluded brother. It is almost certain, however, that if the rejected brother were to visit the congregation where the minister labors next Sunday that he would be served the Lord's Supper. And if the preacher himself happened to be serving the table, he would almost certainly pass the cup and bread to the man that he would not so much as speak to at Abilene.

The minister would not likely think of this as an inconsistency at all, for in the one case he is obeying the scripture that says, "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly," while in the other he is following the injunction, "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." Without reference just here as to the interpretation given to these scriptures, we will only say that it would appear strange to an observer that one would have a religion that would cause him nor even to notice the presence of another on one occasion, and then cause him to include this person in a sacred meal on another occasion.

The observer would be right in one important particular: *there is no higher expression of fellowship than the breaking of bread.* If I pass the cup of the Lord to a man, I am giving the highest expression possible to the fellowship that we share together, for it is the one act that makes us mutual participants in the blood of Christ. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf' (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

If I can break the loaf with a man, I can certainly call on him to lead a prayer or address him as *brother.* If together we bless the cup of the Lord, then I can certainly honor him as a fellow saint anywhere in the world, including Abilene, for what higher relationship is there than "fellowship in the blood and body of Christ" which is expressed in the Lord's Supper?

It is a matter of our practicing what we preach, or preaching what we practice, for there *is* certainly a woeful inconsistency here. We will not even call on the visiting minister from the Christian Church to address the Father, and yet turn right around and serve him the Supper, which would suggest that leading a prayer is an expression of fellowship while the Supper is not. We call Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians "the denominations",

excluding them in our thinking from the body of Christ. We are *the church,'* they are the sectarians. And yet when any of those people meet with us we extend to them the very highest expression of Christian fellowship: *the breaking of bread together.*

Consistency would demand that we recognize as a Christian brother anyone to whom we serve the Lord's Supper, thus extending to him any and all expressions of brotherhood. If we do not recognize a man as a brother in Christ, then we most certainly should not serve him that sacred meal that the apostle Paul describes as fellowship with the body and blood of Christ.

It was Alexander Campbell in his *Christian System* (p. 267) who issued the proposition that "In the house of God there is always the table of the Lord." Neither the house of God nor the table of the Lord has any meaning without the other. So it is with any man's house: if he has no house he would have no table, if he has no table he would have no house. An invitation to his house implies that I am welcome to his table. It is unthinkable that he would serve me at his table and yet extend to me no other hospitality of his house, such as conversing with me in his parlor.

Everyone we welcome to the house of God (that is, the church) we certainly welcome to the table that is in that house. But what meaning is there to the practice of welcoming someone to the table that we do not welcome to the house? Now does it really make sense to view the pious Presbyterian that is sitting in the end seat on the tenth row back as an *outsider* (that is, *not* a Christian and thus not welcomed into the body of Christ) and then hand to him the cup of the Lord when you reach the tenth row?

Can you not imagine a conversation that might grow out of such a situation. The brother who attended the table says to the visiting Presbyterian afterward: "We would like so much to have you as a brother. We would like to see you become a Christian." The Presbyterian says, "Become a Christian? Become your brother? Do you not already think of me as your Christian brother?" Then our brother says to him kindly: "Well, no. You are a Presbyterian. I realize you are a good, moral man, but you are not a Christian until you obey the gospel."

Then just what is the brother to say when the Presbyterian says to him: "Why then did you pass to me the Lord's Supper? As you stood at the table you mentioned that the Lord's Supper is for the Lord's people, and then you walked down the aisle and handed it to me, knowing me to be a Presbyterian."

In the same way the brother who was slighted by the preacher in Abilene could say to him in his Dallas church: "Out at ACC you would not even speak to me, and you deliberately avoided looking at me as we both stood among mutual friends, and here in the house of God you pass to me the cup of the Lord? If we can break bread together in Dallas, why can't we talk with each Other in Abilene?"

We are now close to some sensitive areas in brotherhood thinking, especially in respect to *open membership,* as it is called. In a similar vein we speak of *open communion.* Some of our disciple historians, Louis Cochran in particular, are impressed with the fact that *all* of our many factions in the Christian Church --- Church of Christ practice open communion. You can walk into any of their assemblies, be it of the one-cup persuasion, anti-Sunday School, pro-Herald of Truth, liberal, conservative, or what have you, and you will be received around the table of the Lord. They mayor may not shake your hand once they know who you are, and you might get called "Mr." while all the rest are called "Brother", and they may keep you at arm's length. But still you are not barred from the Lord's Supper.

This *is* an interesting phenomenon in our history. Of all the lines we have drawn on each other we still accept each other without discrimination around the Lord's table. Our attitude seems to be that it is the Lord's table, and not ours, and so we will not judge, but let each judge himself. At the moment of the Supper we all participate together in the sacrifice of Christ. It is indeed remarkable that we can enjoy the sacred meal together and then not even speak to each other when it is over, whether it be Abilene or Dallas.

This rather simplifies the plea of this journal: *let us all treat each other all the time the way we treat each other at the Lord's table.*

We can put it another way: if we welcome them to the table, let us welcome them to the house. Without getting into a discussion on *open membership,* we can insist from the standpoint of consistency that the membership should be as broad as the Lord's Supper. We should welcome as a member everyone to whom we serve the Supper.

It is rather puerile for some of our brethren to argue, when they are confronted with these glaring inconsistencies in our treatment of each other, that in serving the Lord's Supper they just pass it up and down the pews, not knowing and not thinking about who is partaking of it. The point is that if the pious Presbyterian partakes of it, we can't help it; and if the brother who has been withdrawn from partakes of it, we can't jerk it from his hands.

This kind of explanation hardly accounts for our handing the cup of the Lord to the man himself, which we do all the time. And the question remains: if you could pass the Supper in such a way that the man you "dis-fellowship" could not partake of it, would you do so? And does it not follow that if you do not "fellowship" him, you should not hand him the cup of the Lord, which is the greatest expression of fellowship?

The apostle Paul, who tells us most of what we know about the Lord's Supper, does not appear to be one who was willing to break bread with just anyone. From what he says in 1 Cor. 5:11 it is almost certain that he would not pass the cup of the Lord to any brother who is "an idolater, reviler, drunkard or robber." He tells the Corinthians "not even to eat with such a one." While the eating he refers to probably means association in general rather

than the Lord's Supper, it nonetheless would exclude the immoral brother from the Supper. Paul simply would not pass him the cup, wherever he might be sitting or reclining. From Titus 3:10-11 we may also conclude that the apostle would refuse the factious man the Supper.

Beyond this we cannot go. We can hardly conceive of Paul refusing the table of the Lord to a brother who is honestly mistaken about some point of doctrine or who holds opinions different from his own. In Romans 14 he makes it clear that such brethren are to be received. Heretics he would reject, but these are "perverted men who are self-condemned." The immoral he would reject, and these are the revilers, drunkards and robbers. We are abusive of the scriptures when we point to these as reasons for refusing fellowship to Christians who are as moral and sincere as we are, but who happen to differ with us. Even if they hold erroneous views this hardly puts them in the above classifications.

Paul showed gravest concern for those who dared to worship both at the table of the Lord and the table of demons, which no doubt was appealing in ancient Corinth, a seat of the lavish Greek cults. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons," he told them. "You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." (1 Cor. 10:21)

This would indicate that Paul would hardly pass *the cup of blessing* (a term he probably borrowed from Jewish ritual) to a brother who had just returned from a Greek festival, attended by royalty and conducted with pageantry, in which wine was poured out as a libation to the God Serapis, and then poured into the cups of the participants, who would then drink in honor of the god. The apostle would surely say to such a one, "You can't sit at this table after sitting at that one:' To Paul it was a matter of who is Lord. There are gods many and lords many, but the Christian has but one Lord, and in acknowledgment of His lordship, he sits at but one table.

These were the real issues with Paul in respect to fellowship and the Lord's Supper. We can hardly conceive of him being disturbed about such matters that lead us to draw lines on each other.

But perhaps we can take a different view of fellowship with each other as we make the Lord's Supper the focal point. We will receive and recognize as brothers all those to whom we serve the Lord's Supper. If this appears too broad a view, let us limit our restrictions to those that guided Paul's sense of Christian fellowship, showing special sensitivity toward those who sit at the table of demons. Those who honor Jesus as Lord will choose only the table of the Lord, and we should gladly choose to sit with them. ---- *the Editor*

The *Seminar on Fellowship,* Wynnewood Chapel, 2303 S. Tyler, Dallas, Texas, June 15-18, has already attracted wide interest. Many leading brethren from various Church of Christ - Christian Church backgrounds have expressed their intentions to be present. The sessions will be open for anyone to ask or say anything he pleases. Brethren can even demonstrate if they care to. No one will be put in jail. All brethren are warmingly and lovingly welcome. The sessions will be stimulating and brotherly. Write us in care of this journal if you plan to come, or write L. M. Roberts, 4450 Preston Circle, Dallas, about lodging.

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To the Board and Administration of Lubbock Christian college . . .

CONCERNING SPEAKERS THAT BACK OUT

It may be true, as some contend, that no one is so enslaved as he who supposes that he is free. It is a way of saying that none of us is wholly and completely free. Freedom is a relative thing, and we may all be much more unfree that we suppose. We must *grow* toward freedom, and it is probable that most of us are stymied in our growth. This is illustrated in the little, insignificant things that happen as we move along toward the more eventful things. We have reference especially to the men among us who agree to appear on a program (an *unorthodox* program, let us say) and then, because of the pressures that are applied by the keepers of orthodoxy, back down and do not appear after all, even after the announcements have gone out.

This happened to us at one of our Dallas unity meetings. A brother from Abilene was invited to be on the program, and he graciously accepted, knowing full well who was to be on the program with him. A short time before the program was to begin, he felt obligated to excuse himself. We had reports from several quarters that he was under pressure to crawfish. Knowing his reputation for courage, a number of us were confident that he would resist such pressure and exert his freedom in Christ. But we were mistaken. He crawfished. While we were disappointed, we understood. The pressures from the powers that be can be almost a matter of life and death, or so it appears to be, for one’s professional future may well be at stake.

A more recent case of this has just come to light. This time the brother is from Lubbock and the program is a lectureship conducted by Southeastern Christian College, Winchester, Kentucky. This college would be styled a “premillennial college” by the faithful in Lubbock and Abilene. Even though our brethren in Winchester have been maltreated somewhat through the years because of their premillennial heresies, they have responded

most affirmatively to current efforts for unity among all our groups. They have been trying to help by sharing in the programs of the anti-premills, and they have been inviting leaders from other groups to be with them. This they have done despite some opposition from within their own ranks.

Speaking for myself, I have appeared on numerous programs conducted by our premill brethren, including the lectureship in Winchester, and I have learned to love these people deeply through such associations. Those who refuse to enjoy fellowship in Christ with these fine brethren are the losers. That I may differ with them on the millennium has no relation whatever to my love for them or the fellowship that is ours to enjoy together. These brethren have shared in some of our unity meetings, and they have enriched such gatherings by their graciousness. It is not easy for them to invite me to their programs, being the controversial figure that I am, and they have sometime had to withdraw invitations, opposition to my appearance making it unwise. We have to understand that these brethren also have the "keepers of orthodoxy" in their own ranks, making it difficult for those who would to cross party lines and enjoy a larger fellowship. This makes it all the more tragic when their noble efforts in this direction are frustrated by our own unwillingness to participate with them. It must be that we simply do not love enough.

Well, anyway the college in Winchester invited the Lubbock brother, and he accepted. Incidentally, shouldn't a man's word mean something? I agree with Sir David Ross, the British moralist, that a promise is a sacred obligation, a *prima facie* duty, as he calls it; and that one is not to go back on his word except in very unusual circumstances. My girls in Ethics at the university where I teach agree that a woman who in a moment of grief promises her dying husband that she will not remarry might break such a promise. But they didn't find many cases where one might justifiably go back on his word.

Our preachers who back down after committing themselves should at least take their word more seriously than to suppose that all that is necessary is to send a telegram and call the thing off. Arrangements have long been made, announcements have gone out, it is too late to get someone else (and who wants to be asked at the last minute?), and much more. Try your hand at working up such a program, and then have them start backing out on you, and you'll see what I mean. Yet I realize that there is that strange morality that permits some people to treat heretics and digressives differently from faithful brethren. After all, error does not have the same rights as truth, and you don't have to be as courteous to things like premillennialists!

I read in *The Exhorter* (a "premill paper") that the educator from Lubbock was to appear, and I was pleased that he would do this, and was convinced that it would be a happy experience for all concerned. I am also certain that the brother accepted the invitation in all good faith; that he was pleased to be asked and happy to accept. He wanted to do it. Though I do not know this brother personally, I have every reason to

believe that he is a fine Christian gentleman. It was, therefore, with deep regret that I learned that he had withdrawn.

Unlike the Abilene brother who did not wish to admit that it was because of pressure that he reneged, the Lubbock brother was as candid as a camera. His wire stated that it was because the administration and board of Lubbock Christian College "believe that my participation in SCC lectureship would hurt the influence of LCC" He added that "brethren also advise that my personal influence and usefulness would be affected without helping SCC."

We tell this little story not only to show how enslaved we are to the powers of institutionalism and professionalism, but how sectarian we are. Can you imagine a Luther or a Campbell giving such a reason as that! The question here is not what is *right,* but what is *expedient.* A man must safeguard his future; he must not keep the wrong company. He must know the right people and appear on the right programs. He must play it smart. And so we are told that the brother's "personal influence and usefulness would be affected" if he dared to cross party lines and appear on the program of a little premill college in Kentucky. Imagine a John Knox or a Raccoon John Smith in such a situation! Can you not see the gleam of righteousness indignation in their eyes at such an audacious display of ecclesiastical dictation?

This shows what institutionalism and partyism can do to people. If it were *truth* and *love* that motivated such decisions, the powers that be in Lubbock would have said to their staff member something like this: "Go on up there and be with those brethren. It will be good for everybody. After all, we haven't had enough contact with each other, and we need to show those brethren that we love them too. Who knows but what we may through such associations lead them to greater truth. By all means, go, and we'll be praying for you *and* for them."

And they would have been right. It would have *helped,* not hurt, the Lubbock school. Even the Church of Christ brotherhood would not have condemned them. The brother in question would have had an enriching experience, and his usefulness would not have been affected adversely. To any brother that might have raised an eyebrow, they could simply have said: "We believe in speaking the truth in love *anywhere.* And besides we are free men in Christ," This kind of spirit would also give Lubbock Christian College a better image before the world of education, for they need not be talking about building a liberal arts institution when they will not even permit a staff member to visit a college with a different color and deliver lectures on education.

That is why this kind of maneuver will be confined to party circles. The college officers would not want folk like the Ford Foundation to know that this is the way they really are in under the surface. A *liberal* education, indeed! How can they talk about prin-

ciples of freedom, justice, democracy, love, and brotherhood, and then be so sectarian in their thinking as to be afraid to stick their heads out the front door?

I am strongly suspicious that such brethren as these would really like to be free from such parochialism — and let us face it, men just aren't free when they have to pick out the places where they can afford to speak. This journal criticized John F. Kennedy when he permitted a bishop of his church to tell him he could not speak at a memorial service for the four chaplains that died together. The then Congressman Kennedy withdrew when the bishop told him to. We raised the question as to whether a man like this was *free* enough from parochialism to be president of the United States.

The some shoe fits us. An institution that will not let a staff member speak at another college on the subject of education because it is off-limits within party ranks is not free enough to call itself a *liberal* educational institution. It is in truth *parochial*, they themselves bearing witness to this by their own narrowness.

Yes, such brethren want to be free, but the question is whether they want freedom more than they want party approbation and support. Partyism builds fear into men. Even when they would like to do something, they dare not. Perhaps even the majority of the party leaders would like to see a broader view taken of things, but none dares to take the first move. Everyone fears everyone else. It is a tragic thing.

It is only the love of Christ that can overcome such fear and make men free. Partyism enslaves men; Christ makes men free. This is why we pursue the rather thankless task of publishing this journal. We hope we may motivate men to love Christ and those who are His *more* than they love their party.

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed," (John 8:36) — *the Editor*

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THE JOY OF LISTENING

By Robert W. Burns

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear," (Matt. 13:16)

The attentiveness of the people who were with Him was praised by Christ in these words. They were using their eyes to see. They were using their ears to hear. Part of our human difficulty is that many people walk about in God's great world and they neither see with their eyes nor hear with their ears.

Early last week an interesting visitor came to my study, a man not a member of our congregation, but a searcher after truth who said to me: “For many years I have come almost every day to the Chapel of this church and here I have often found God myself; but for the past week I have come every day and nothing happened. Tell me, what’s wrong?”

I asked him, “Tell me about yourself,” As he went on to describe to me the experiences through which he has gone in the months prior to his visit to my study, I listened attentively to what he had to say. I knew the joy, the keen quality of joy, that comes from really seeing somebody and really hearing somebody. It was not hard to tell that the reason he could not hear, as he often had heard in the Chapel before, was that there were clamorous, competing voices inside himself, in his confusion of his personal life, which made it impossible for him to listen to anything outside of himself.

This is no criticism of this friend of our congregation. This is simply a description of what happens at times, I daresay, to everyone of us. We become so preoccupied with our own concerns and so confused by the competing voices within ourselves that we do not listen to anybody we cannot listen to anything outside ourselves.

“The Joy of Listening” is the joy of hearing, the joy of being attentive to what is around us, of becoming aware of the world in which we live with other people, aware of the many sides of our own selves, and aware most of all of God Himself. There is a joy in becoming aware. This is what I call your attention to as a part of the joy of listening.

The whole appeal of the scriptures is a challenge to us: “Come, let us reason together.” God Himself says, in substance, let us listen to one another. Observe the facts for yourself. Use all the avenues of your sensory perception. The appeal of the Bible is, *Taste* and know that the Lord is good.” The appeal of the Bible is, “Look unto me and live.” The appeal of the scripture is, “*Hear* what the Lord says.” The appeal of Christ was, “Reach hither your hand and *touch* the nailprints. Put your finger in my side.” The appeal of the scriptures is for us to “*smell the sweet savor of life”* that God has made so good. Even the sixth sense, that modern psychology recognizes, is used in the scriptures; the sense of the difference between heat and cold being our sixth sense. You may remember how John Wesley, in describing the moment of his great transformation, said, “I felt my heart strangely warmed.” This that the scriptures speak of as the warmth of God’s love, the sunshine of His grace. The lightness of the sunshine, so often used as an expression for God, today gives warmth and beauty to the world. The scriptures are full of this appeal for us really to use our senses to become aware, to listen. “Be still and know that I am God.”

God has made us in His image, and what is God like in us? It is the concern for each other that motivates us to listen, really to listen to other persons. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”

What do we mean by listening to each other? Somebody here may say casually, “Of course I listen; I’m always listening; I’m not deaf.” But you are not always listening. This is a selective process. Sometimes you turn your attention off just as much as a person who is physically deaf will sometimes turn off a hearing aid. You wives know what it’s like, don’t you? Sometimes you talk to your husband and one look at his face makes you know that he is not paying the slightest bit of attention to what you are saying. If you ask him to repeat the words for you, he might do this in some routine fashion by rote; but he hasn’t *heard* you. Every parent has known the experience at times of talking to your children and some little Dennis the Menace, from two-years-old on, you know as you talk to that child he isn’t listening, and you say to him our of your own sense of frustration, “Look here, you listen to me.” Maybe he pays attention then, and maybe he doesn’t.

Listening is not simply passively sitting somewhere and letting sounds break upon your ear drums. Real listening is creatively active. One of the biggest compliments you can pay anyone is really to listen to him. You husbands, listen to your wives; and you wives, listen to your husband, nor only for the words that are said but the undertone, the tremor of the voice that means some moment of greater meaning than usual. Listen! Listening is more than physical, it is a quality of concern, of interest in someone else. Listening to another person answers a very deep need in us. We need to listen and to be listened to.

I heard sometime ago of the interesting experience of a man who began advertising in the daily papers of a great city that for $5.00 an hour he would listen to anybody. He wouldn’t give them any advice, he wouldn’t make any comments; but for $5.00 an hour he’d just listen to them. They filled his time. They filled his time so much that he doubled his rates and he had to get six assistants, and still people paid $10.00 an hour for somebody who would honest-to-God, really listen attentively to them.

One of our deepest needs is to hear and to be heard. *All learning begins by listening.* When a scientist goes *into* his laboratory, in substance he is saying to the facts, “Speak to me. Tell me how you behave. Give me the information I am seeking.” Thus the scientist is listening in his laboratory. As a teacher teaches in a classroom, the only way she has of ever getting any ideas through is if her students are attentive to what she says.

Of course, there are times when we listen when we really have no business as Christians doing so. The wagging tongue is often criticized but, my friends, *the listening ear is just as guilty as the wagging tongue.* Have you ever noticed the expression on some person’s face when one member of the group will start to relate what is obviously going to be some relished morsel of gossip, tearing someone in shreds. You can tell by the tone of voice that he is going to destroy the reputation of someone else. How avidly some of the group will listen, how eagerly they pay attention when they hadn’t been paying attention before. All of a sudden they awaken to the fact of what is going to come now that they can

listen to and then repeat fits into their habit of hostility, in their desire to be destructive to other people. Sometimes the kind of listening we do is a revelation of the sickness of our soul or the health of our personality.

When you lose the joy of listening to God through scripture and prayer, you are spiritually sick. When you delight in hearing the sound of your own voice instead of giving attention to the voices of those about you, *you are spiritually sick*, When your ear reaches more for the praises of men than for the blessing of God, *you are spiritually sick.* When you are harsh and bitter toward those who differ with you, instead of feeling tenderly toward all who love Christ, *you are spiritually sick.* When you would rather hear the comforting assurances of the scriptures and avoid the challenge of "take up your cross daily and follow Me", *you are spiritually sick.*. When you refuse to listen to any criticism of yourself and insist that all around you constantly bolster your egotism, *you are spiritually sick.*

This is what Jesus was talking about when with gladness in His heart He looked at the attentive faces around Him and said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." These people were alive, alive to the great truth Jesus had just given them in the parable of the sower.

Many people do not understand each other. I see every week at least one, and many weeks several couples *in* various stages of conflict, always marked by a breakdown in communication. They can't carry on a normal conversation for any length of time without one of them losing his temper.

Dean Teele of the Harvard School of Business Administration wrote sometime ago a very significant article on the amount of hostility and tension in the business world and how these poor interpersonal relationships destroy the efficiency of any business operation. In his article he said: "One reason so many business men are uncreative is that they hate their jobs, and they hate the people around them." Then Dean Teele concluded: "Our hates could be changed to love by changing the way we listen (to one another)."

How can we develop the skill we need in listening to each other? Here are five simple suggestions:

1. *Be genuinely interested* in the people around you, genuinely interested in them. Observe them thoughtfully. Ask questions about them. Seek to be really interested in them.

2. Put yourself in the other person's place, try to enter into his experience. Say to yourself, "If I were in his place, what would I really be thinking in the circumstances that he faces?"

3. Then if you want to develop your skill in listening, watch yourself: *How many times do you interrupt* other people when they're talking to you?

It was just within the last thousand years, which means, of course, it could have been yesterday, I had one of the most interesting opportunities to observe the interpersonal relations between a man and his wife. That woman couldn't say three sentences without her husband interrupting her. He kept it up until at last I said, "Why not let her just tell her story as she wants to, and you be quiet, won't you, for a while, and let your wife talk. She wants to say these things without being constantly interrupted." How many times do you interrupt the people who are talking around you?

4. If you want to develop skill in listening to people, when they say something *make an appropriate comment* in response, throw them back the ball, follow up the line of thought they've been discussing, don't just change the subject because some totally new idea has just occurred to you.

5. Continue the conversation as long as it is helpful. Sometimes listening can be destructive.

I think one of the most remarkable illustrations of that is of a man who went from the study of a pastor in our own city where, as he talked, and the minister didn't restrain him at all, he built himself up into a first-class case of hysteria. He left the study deeply disturbed, got into his automobile and drove down on the South Expressway, pushed the accelerator clear to the floor and deliberately ran into the middle pillar of one of those great bridges and killed himself.

Sometimes you should not listen. Sometimes you have to say to people, "This has gone as far as it is good for us to go today. I'll talk to you again another day." Or totally change the subject with them, somehow get their mind off of this that is becoming a fixation and working them into hysteria. But as long as the conversation is helpful and the time limit does not become so great as to be hurtful, then we need to keep that conversation rolling in the way it's going.

We can develop skill in listening to each other. This is why Carl R. Rogers in one of his great books wrote these short sentences about the importance of listening: "When we listen with understanding it means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about. Stated so briefly, this may sound absurdly simple, but it is not. It is an approach we have found extremely potent in the field of psychotherapy. *It is the most effective agent we know for altering the basic personality structure of an individual and for improving his relationships and his communications with others."*

It does that, Dr. Rogers is saying, not only to the person who speaks, but it does it to the person who listens. *Listening develops your capacity as a person.* Listening can help to change your whole character structure, as well as change the character structure of the person who is listened to.

The worship service is, in one sense, an experience in listening. Most important of all, we come in to be quiet, to listen to God, to look at the windows with their reminders of God's love, to see the altar and the cross, to hear the music, to listen in the quiet of the Communion to what God may have to say, to hear the scriptures. It is an experiment in listening, attentively, really putting our minds on it and listening.

I spend more time in listening, by far, than I do in talking. All through the week, as well as on Sunday, I give attention to two major centers of interest: What does God have to say on any single issue? What is in the mind of Christ? This is in the background of my thinking constantly. From time to time my mind flashes momentarily to the center of attention and I hold it there and then, when my attention wavers to the other center of attention, the persons that I am with, the people that I am talking to or listening to, I search for what does God have to say on this issue and what does this person really think? My own mind will flicker back and forth and, keeping the two together, I try to compare what is *in* their mind and what I think is the will of God.

"Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." The beginning of all processes of change for good, the start of redemption for us personally, the renewal of our soul, the achievement of religious reality, the recapture of the rapture we knew when first we met our Lord — all this begins every time with listening.

If Saul had not been willing to hear on the Damascus road, he would never have become the great Apostle. If he had not been willing to see beyond the light that flashed to blind him, to see with the eyes of his mind and to understand — if he had not been willing to do this, all the great career of the Apostle would have gone by and someone else would have had to be called by God.

One of the most thrilling and dramatic illustrations of what I am talking about today is in a book by Richard E. Byrd called ALONE. You will remember that Admiral Byrd took an expedition to the Antarctic. Throughout all one winter he stayed at a lonely post on a bleak icy shelf between Little America and the South Pole, seeking to obtain scientific data. The whole winter, in that particular place for months, he was utterly alone. Here is what he wrote about the experience:

"I am not alone. The human race is not alone in the universe . . . For those who seek it, there is an inexhaustible evidence of an all pervading intelligence.

"I paused to listen to the silence . . . The day was dying, the night was being born but with great peace. Here were the imponderable processes and forces of the cosmos . . . Harmony, that was it! That was what came out of the silence — a gentle rhythm, the strain of a perfect chord, the music of the spheres perhaps.

"It was enough to catch that rhythm, momentarily to be myself a part of it. In that instant I could feel no doubt of man's oneness with the universe. The conviction came that that rhythm was too orderly, too harmonious, too perfect to be a product of blind chance —

that, therefore, there must be purpose in the whole and that man was part of that whole and not an accidental offshoot. It was a feeling that transcended reason, that went to the heart of a man's despair and found it groundless. The universe was a cosmos, not a chaos; man was rightfully a part of that cosmos as were the day and the night."

Admiral Byrd listened. He really listened until he heard in the processes of life what everyone can hear if he will give attention to hearing and listening.

This is the appeal of the scriptures of the life of Christ to us if we listen to hear, really to hear. This is the appeal of Christ from that hill shaped like a skull: "God forgive them for they know not what they do."

God is asking us to listen and, as we listen, to understand.

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THE ONE BODY

Harold Key

A while back, visiting in a hospital ward, one of the patients there asked me what church I belonged to. I told him, "If you are a Christian, we both belong to the same church." At first he seemed surprised at my answer, but then he said, "You know, that's right. I really meant to ask you what denomination you belong to; but denominations just divide us, don't they?" The answer of scripture and history to that last question is: Indeed, they do!

The title of this address is from Eph. 4:4, which declares, "There is one body." This body spoken of here is the same body introduced in the first chapter, where it is affirmed that God the Father has made the Lord Jesus Christ "the head over all things for the church which is his body." The thing to note is that the scriptures do not say, "There ought to be one body," but rather, they declare, "There is one body." This is an important point especially for us, because if the church is his body (which we accept), and there is but one body according to scripture, then there is but one church. In other words, the church is *one*.

This truth that the church is one is the very foundation of the nineteenth century Restoration Movement in the United States. In the famous *Declaration and Address* by Thomas Campbell in the year 1809, the first proposition sets forth this affirmation: "that the church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one."

How, then, did the present-day world, and especially the heirs of the Restoration Movement, arrive at such an idea which generally exists that the church is not one? Why would any professing believers in Christ Jesus deny the unity of his body and conduct themselves as though Christ were in fact divided? I think the cause, of course, is the devil working through the fallen, unregenerate human nature which we all share through Adam. In the very first instance of brotherhood, when Cain murdered his brother Abel, is seen the typical response to a relationship shared by jealous, self-seeking, loveless natures that all mankind inherits from the first man.

If it is at all possible, let me drive home this point. Reduced to one word, that which seeks to destroy brotherhood is lovelessness. Lovelessness has been the main factor in every instance from the time of Cain down to the present. Men may claim that it has been *things* which have led them to turn against one another, but that is not correct. Men may differ over many things and still sit down around the Table of the Lord together, for people simply cannot fight and destroy those whom they fervently love. We do not destroy those whom we most love because love always perceives a unity which transcends any *things*.

The history of the Judo-Christian religion is a clear testimony to how difficult it has been for God our Father to bring men to perceive a real unity with Himself and with each other. The efforts of man to achieve his own basis of a lasting unity simply leads to a tower of Babel --- to confusion, strife, alienation and separation. If ever a real unity is to be attained, God Himself must produce it. Accordingly, God called one man, Abraham into a special relation with Himself and promised to bless through his descendants all the nations of earth. By entering into a solemn covenantal relation with this family, a sense of unity eventually was achieved which bound the twelve tribes to the God of Israel and to one another. While Israel actually was united from their beginning through the same covenantal relation with the same Lord, yet it required several centuries before they achieved a vital and permanent sense of their unity. In fact, this did not occur until after the Babylonian Captivity.

However, God had a much larger end in view than simply unifying the twelve tribes of Israel. What He was really endeavoring to do was to use Israel as a beginning in a plan that would ultimately bring the entire human family into an eternal spiritual unity with Himself and with one another. Accordingly then, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ His Son was not of another and different purpose in the mind of God and unrelated to His original intention. Rather, the church was the direct outgrowth and fulfilling of the divine plan for unifying all things in heaven and on earth.

The point I am trying to make is the very theme of the New Testament epistle of Ephesians. The theme of this letter to first century Christians in particular and to all Christians in general, is that “in Christ” is fulfilled that ancient purpose of God. *In Christ*

is achieved the long-sought unity of man with God and of men with men. Let us read the opening statement:

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (Ephesians 1 :3-10)

Following this declaration that God set forth in Christ His plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, the continuing first three chapters are an elaboration of how this is actually accomplished in Christ, using as an illustration the alienated Jew and Gentiles.

> "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2:13-18)

Then, as in all the letters of Paul, the doctrinal part (that is, the presentation of what God has done for man) is followed by a statement of man's response. The question here is, "What are the practical implications of our being one with God and with each other?" The answer comes,

> " . . . lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:1-3)

The unity is already there. All you have to do is to recognize it and nurture it. You do not have to create it yourself. God has already done that in His Son. In fact, you cannot create it; you can only accept it. Just as the unity within a physical family is derived from the parental source, so it is in the family of God. God through Christ is the source of its life and its unity. The church is one. We do not have to make it so. The Father has already made it one, consisting of all those in every place who confess His Son Jesus to be the Christ and who endeavor to obey him according to their understanding of his will.

How, then, is this unity of the Spirit which we all have in Christ maintained so as to be kept in the bond of peace? Truly God chose what is simple and despised in the eyes of the world to confound the wise and the mighty. The unity of the spiritual body of Christ is to be maintained in the gentle ties of peace and harmony by an individual manifestation of the nature of him who called us into our relationship. The Ephesian letter points out specifically that spiritual harmony is maintained by the inward disposition of lowliness and meekness and by the outward manifestation of patience and forbearance in love. These characteristics are the exact opposites of pride with its corollaries of ambition, love of control and prestige, hyper-criticism and faultfinding. Unless the gentle and loving disposition of the Savior be manifest in the saved, our unity of the Spirit will not be maintained in the bond of peace.

Colossians, the companion epistle of Ephesians, also presents the dynamic of love as the factor that maintains harmony among the members of the body of Christ.

> "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." (Col. 3:12-15)

Let us remember this point: love is the cohesive element within the divine nature.

If this is the will of God and the Spirit of His Son that the church be united, then why is the church not united today? But that is just the point! The church is united today, and it has *always* been united. If there is still only "one Spirit," if there is still only "one Lord", if there is still only "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all," then there is still only "one body". Since the body of Christ is still one, this is why partyism, sectarianism and denominationalism is so sinful. They are the opposite of lowliness and meekness, of patience and forbearance in love. They obscure the unity of the body of Christ and lead us to act as though we were not all really members one of another. This negates the Good News by robbing the gospel of Christ of its greatest credentials, and it leaves an unbelieving world disdainful of the only means of unification with God and with itself.

Brethren, it is weakening to have conflicts within any body, but it is tragic to have factions within the body of Christ, regardless of whatever euphemistic designation or denomination by which they are called. One of the Arch-adversary's cleverest tricks was to get us to call these party divisions "churches." The father of lies knows they are not different churches, for the Father of Heaven says plainly that there is only *one* church. It is no better to call them "false churches," because this is still a part of the same trick to defeat the unifying power of Christ. To regard some members of the body as "false

churches" leads directly to the concept of there being a "true church" (to which we belong, of course, which is completely free from error and sin). Deep down within us, we know there is no such congregation or groups of congregations anywhere which are not without members who are mistaken on many things and continually in need of cleansing from sin. But, if the devil can somehow trick us into a doublethink so that we can admit this fact and yet at the same time disregard the implications of it, he succeeds in leading us to repudiate brotherhood by a process of semantics.

To avoid *just* such a mistake, the Apostle Paul refused to consider for one moment that those in the church at Corinth who called themselves by their different factious designations were really different "churches", He refused to fall into the error of recognizing those who distinguished themselves from the other parties by saying they were "of Christ" as the *true* church, implying that the others were not of Christ also. The truth was (and so Paul emphasized it) they were *all* "the church of God which is at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1-2). The appeal to all the parties to agree, to have no dissensions among them, was not in order to be one in Christ, but because they already *were* one in Christ. In the ensuing discussion concerning spiritual gifts, Paul reminded them, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27).

It was this truth, "that the church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one" in spite of its apparent divisions, that led to the beginning of the Restoration Movement, which Alexander Campbell declared was a "project to unite the Christians in all the sects." This common aim recognized the unity of the church even though the church was separated into the various sectarian folds. This ability to see the one body under such circumstances requires unsectarian eyes. But because they were able to see the people of God "caught in sectarian thickets," they spoke of the church as "the scattered flock." This is why they urged all believers to be Christians only, saying, "We do not claim to be the *only* Christians, but we would be *Christians* only."

It is such an absolutely sectarian spirit among us today, and so completely contrary to the aim "to unite the Christians in all sects," which denies that the church is a scattered flock or that there are Christians outside our own party fold. This attitude of being the only Christians, of being *the* church of Christ, is a comparatively new innovation, completely against the instruction to early Christians and contrary to our own history as a Restoration Movement. This partisan attitude among us, so reminiscent of Corinth, is chiefly a development of the past generation which we are by no means obligated to maintain. There have always been voices warning against this drift. Even as late as 1920, such a paper as *Gospel Advocate* was deploring this growing sectarian spirit among us. M. C. Kurfees, the esteemed opponent of the use of instrumental music in congregational

worship, wrote a series of articles pleading with the readers not to narrow their concept of the one body of Christ simply to those who agreed with themselves on points of controversy, but rather to keep a perspective of the church as a whole. In his third article on the subject he wrote:

> "The facts presented in previous articles warrant the conclusion that, in the present divided state of the church, precisely as if there were no divisions, the only correct use of the term, when applied to the Christians or children of God in a given community, even though they be separated into different denominational divisions, is to make it include them all, regardless of the errors in which some of them are entangled . . , " (These articles originally appeared in August and September, 1920, and were reprinted in the' "Pioneer Pulpit" section of the *Gospel Advocate* in April and May, 1956.)

Men of perception, from apostolic times down to the present, have realized that it is erroneous to equate unity with uniformity. The unity of the one body of Christ is far more than the "ticky-tacky" uniformity of the houses in a modern real estate development that are all built from a single set of blueprints. The unity of the one body of Christ is comparable only to the unity within the human body, where the *unity* of the members is a real one of interrelation and function rather than uniformity of appearance. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote to the factious Corinthians:

> "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body --- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free --- and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many, If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honor able we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which are more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12 :12-27)

In the church at Corinth there was unity even though there was a lack of harmony. Although there ought to have been “no discord in the body” (verse 25), yet there was discord, and it was in the body. What this means is that since unity ought to produce harmony, the unity has to be first, and then the harmony. It is an insurmountable mistake to turn it the other way around and insist that harmony is that which produces unity, Unity is essential to the body’s being, while harmony is essential to the body’s well-being, When the members of a body fail to function in harmony, the body becomes sickly. But the body is still a unity, whether sick or well.

As it was in the beginning, so it is now. The solution to the problem of discord in the one spiritual body of Christ back in the first century is the same solution to the problem of discord in the one spiritual body now in the twentieth century. The solution to the parties and factions in the one church at Corinth was the “more excellent way” of chapter thirteen. We have praised love and preached love as the greatest thing in the world for almost every situation except the express application to which it was made: --- the solution that dissolves the fractions and separations within the body of Jesus Christ. Love not only dissolves the irritations within the body, but it is the cohesive element “which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14). In all our concern for unity, or fellowship, or ecumenicity, or whatever we call it, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels in councils and conferences, but have not love, it profits us nothing.

The only source sufficient to move us to love each other into harmony is the old, old story of God’s great love for us. It is the gospel which is the power of God, --- the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God who was born in the likeness of sinful men and gave his life even unto death on a cross to make atonement (at-one-ment). It is the Good News of him who was raised by the power of God to be our living Brother, who even now intercedes for us, and who promises to come again in a little while to receive us unto himself. He is the source of our love. The Apostle John states it simply, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

> “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21)

Harold Key is minister of the Central Church of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri.

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SPECIAL ISSUE NEXT MONTH. We are happy to announce a special issue in April on *Alexander Campbell: The man and His Mission.* It will contain two studies in depth: "The Several Worlds of Alexander Campbell" by Louis Cochran, author of *The Fool of God;* and "What Alexander Campbell Was Trying to Do" by Leroy Garrett. It will be issued in permanent booklet form with separate cover, as well as a regular issue of this journal. Prepublication price on the booklets, 3 for $1. Order a handful for educators, libraries, discriminating friends.

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